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ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH—No. 60.

OFFICIAL CIRCULAR

Concerning the Vaccination of School-Children.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.

SPRINGFIELD, ILL., MARCH, 1882.

At the annual meeting of the STATE BOARD OF HEALTH, held in Chicago, March 2-3, 1882, (adjourned from Springfield, January 19,) the subject of the Vaccination of Public School-Children being under consideration, the Secretary called attention to the suggestion in his informal report (previously submitted,) as to the propriety of the BOARD considering whether any modification of the School-Vaccination Order was necessary or expedient, and if so, in what respect. He stated that while the Order had been very generally complied with, and the results obtained had fully justified the wisdom and timeliness of this action of the BOARD, there were certain facts and conditions which seemed worthy of attention.

These are briefly as follows:

1. The winter has been an unusually open one, and in many portions of the State the country roads have been, and still are, almost impassable, while the high water in many localities adds to the difficulty. All this causes much labor and expense, both to vaccinating physicians and to parents, which will be avoided as the roads dry up and the weather becomes settled.

2. The unusual demand for virus has made it impossible to procure a supply in many localities.

3. There is among many a bias for vaccinating in April, May or June,—a preference which may very properly be deferred to. From the climatic conditions of this State the months named are certainly more favorable than the winter and early spring. There is then less risk of complications from sudden changes of temperature and other causes.

4. The measure has been a very radical and sweeping one. Some time must be allowed for education in such cases. Prejudices and opposition,—which, of course, the BOARD may, and which it would be its duty in an emergency to, disregard,—will largely disappear if time be granted for reflection, discussion and information.

5. The immediate sanitary necessity which dictated the enactment of the Order in November last does not now exist. The disease is declining in the State at large.

In view of all these considerations, the question presents itself: Will it not be wise and profitable to suspend the enforcement of penalties for non-compliance until such time as the vast mass of data now being accumulated can be digested, an accurate view of the results already obtained be had, and the best course determined upon to make the Order permanent and fully operative with the least friction and hardship.

At the conclusion of the Secretary's remarks, the BOARD—

Ordered, That the Secretary be authorized to take such steps as, in his judgment, may be necessary to secure the completion of the work of a full protection of the school children of the State against small-pox; which disease still exists to some extent, and is liable again to become prevalent so long as the enormous immigration continues, and while any considerable number of persons remain unprotected in any community.

In pursuance of the above authorization it is desired to learn from school authorities,—County Superintendents, School Directors and Teachers,—their views as to the most feasible plan by which to secure a completion of the work. Suggestions as to extension of time, with reasons therefor; details of difficulties encountered; and any other information, based upon experience, will be cordially received.

It should be understood that it is the fixed intention of the STATE BOARD to extend this absolutely necessary measure of protection against a loathsome disease to every scholar in attendance at the public schools of this State,—not simply to meet this emergency but to be prepared against the possibility of a future epidemic.

In Chicago, for the past fourteen years, one of the first questions asked of an applicant for admission to school is: *Where is your vaccination certificate?* Until this is produced, the child can not enter the school as a pupil. Result: During the present epidemic it is stated that there have been *six thousand* cases of small-pox and varioloid in that city. This is in the proportion of one case to every one hundred inhabitants. In the same ratio the number of cases among the school children would be between **five hundred-and-fifty** and **six hundred**. The actual number of cases has been just **seven**. And, notwithstanding the existence of such a wide-spread epidemic, not a single school has been closed, nor a child (except the seven mentioned) been deprived of school facilities in that city.

What has been done in Chicago can be done in the State at large; and it is the purpose and duty of the STATE BOARD to spare no effort to this end.

Now that there is a lull in the present epidemic, the work may be proceeded with more deliberately and with more thoroughness. But it will not do to defer action too long. It is a poor time to vaccinate in the face of an epidemic. Doctors are then too busy; vaccine is scarce and high-priced; and, more importantly than all else, the results of vaccination are generally much more severe, and complications more frequent, during the prevalence of small-pox. To defer vaccination until small-pox appears is about as wise as to wait until a conflagration is raging before organizing the fire department and providing the water-supply. And it should not be forgotten that this conflagration is only smouldering in many localities. The disease may yet spring up into epidemic proportions in many parts of the State before it is entirely suppressed. It is tolerably sure to do so wherever there are many unprotected individuals. Already, since the adjournment of the BOARD, there have been reported more new infected points in three days than in the three weeks previous. These new infection-centres are confined to the

southern portion of the State, and to counties where the enforcement of the Vaccination Order by the school authorities has been the most delayed or neglected. As a result, in at least two townships, the schools have been broken up,—a disaster which would have been avoided had the Order been complied with.

For the present, however, and until the promulgation of further orders, the exclusion of children not yet vaccinated need not be insisted upon, **except in localities where small-pox now exists, or where it may hereafter occur.** In such localities the provisions of the Vaccination Order (S. B. H. No. 50B,) must be rigidly enforced.

No child not properly protected against small-pox, as such protection is defined in said Order, must be allowed to attend a public school in any place where there is small-pox. It is the duty of the local health authorities, as well as of the school directors, to exclude all such unprotected children.

As previously stated, there is no necessity for closing a school in the presence of small-pox if this measure be faithfully enforced.

BY AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD :

JOHN H. RAUCH, M. D., *Secretary.*

NOTE.—County Superintendents are respectfully requested to secure the publication of this Circular (or its purport) in the local press, so as to insure a prompt and general knowledge of the purposes of the BOARD. A *pro rata* supply is sent to each County Superintendent for distribution; but additional copies will be furnished, or will be mailed direct to school directors, teachers and others, on receipt of addresses.

J. H. R.